

TAFSĪR TADABBUR AL-QUR'AN

(A Reflective Commentary of the Qur'an)

INTRODUCTION:

SURAT AL-FĀTIHAH AND THE FOUR QULS



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SURAT AL-FĀTIḤAH

THE OPENING (1)

TEXT AND TRANSLATION

سُورَةُ الْفَاتِحَةِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿١﴾ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣﴾
مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٤﴾ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ
﴿٦﴾ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٧﴾

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. [1] All [grateful] praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds. [2] The Beneficent, the Merciful. [3] Master of the Day of Judgment. [4] You [alone] do we worship, and You [alone] do we ask for help. [5] Guide us on the straight (correct) path. [6] The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favours. Not [the path] of those upon whom Your wrath is brought down, nor of those who go astray. [7]

INTRODUCTION

Surat al-Fāṭiḥah (1) is the opening chapter of the Qur'an. It was the 5th chapter to be revealed.¹ It has seven verses and was revealed in Makka, and according to some reports, once again in Madina. A number of exegetes consider it to be the first complete chapter to be revealed.²

More than ten different names have been given for this chapter by the Prophet (s) and the Imams (a), the most important of which are:

1. *Fāṭiḥat al-kitāb* (the opening of the book). The name comes from the fact that it is the first chapter of the Qur'an as well as the opening of the daily prayer.³ This name was used for the surah even at the time of the Prophet (s), indicating that the sequence of the Qur'an was probably determined during his lifetime.

¹ Ma'rifat, 'Ulūm-i Qur'ānī, p. 90.

² Ṭabrisī, *al-Bayān*, 1/87.

³ Ibid.

2. *Al-Ḥamd* (grateful praise). This is a common reference to the chapter in the traditions, and is derived from the famous phrase at the opening of the second verse, *alḥamdu lillāh*.
3. *Umm al-kitāb* (the mother of the book). The name is a reference to the fact that it stands above the rest of the chapters of the Qur'an, and contains God's greatest name. It has been narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that: The greatest name (*ism al-a'zam*) of God is interspersed in *umm al-kitāb*.⁴
4. *Al-sab'a al-mathānī* (the seven oft-repeated [verses]). This is because Surat al-Ḥamd contains seven (*sab'a*) verses including the *basmalah*. And because it was revealed twice, once in Makka and once in Madina, and it is recited twice in every prayer (minimum ten times daily), it is called the 'oft-repeated (*mathānī*)' verses.⁵ Q15:87 states:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ

*We have indeed granted you the seven oft-repeated verses
and the grand Qur'an.*

In Surat al-Fātiḥah, the three principal tenets of belief (*'aqā'id*) have been summarized:

1. Unicity of God (*tawḥīd*),
2. Prophethood (*nabuwwah*), and
3. Resurrection (*ma'ād*).

If these tenets are understood, servanthood (*'ubūdiyyah*) would naturally follow, and the verses of the chapter, expressed as the speech of the servants, would be recited sincerely.

The chapter can be divided into three sections:

1. The introduction to God, the Almighty, through His name Allah, which encompasses all His attributes. Thereafter, verses recount His attributes of Beauty (*jamāl*) and Majesty (*jalāl*).
2. The next section describes the covenant between the believer and God, of sincere worship and complete reliance.

⁴ Ṣadūq, *Thawāb al-A'māl*, p. 104.

عَنِ الصَّادِقِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) - إِسْمُ اللَّهِ الْأَعْظَمُ مُنْقَطِعٌ فِي أَمِّ الْكِتَابِ.

⁵ Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, 4/157.

عَنِ الصَّادِقِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) - وَإِنَّمَا سُمِّيَتْ الْمَثَانِي لِأَنَّهَا تُقَالُ فِي الرَّكَعَيْنِ.

3. In the final section there is a supplication and plea for guidance on the straight path.

In this regard, a tradition from Imam al-Sadiq (a) states: Surat al-Ḥamd is the chapter whose beginning is praise (*taḥmīd*), its middle is sincerity (*ikhhlāṣ*), and its ending is supplication (*duʿāʾ*).⁶

The relationship between Surat al-Fātiḥah and the rest of the Qurʾan is that of a prayer and an answer. Surat al-Fātiḥah teaches the etiquette of invoking God: one should first recite the *basmalah*, then recognize and praise Allah, thereafter, pledge servitude, and then ask for one's desire; in this case, the desire is expressed for the greatest of bounties, which is the gift of guidance. The rest of the chapters of the Qurʾan form God's answer to this perfect prayer through instructive parables, histories of the Prophets (s) and their communities, theological proofs, legislative commands, and moral teachings. Indeed, God states this fact in the very opening of the next chapter. Q2:2 states:

ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

*This is the Book about which there is no doubt;
a guidance for the God-wary.*

LINK TO THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER

As it is the opening chapter of the Qurʾan, Surat al-Fātiḥah has no previous chapter before it. However, keeping in mind the recommendation to resume a new recital of the Qurʾan on its completion, the previous surah can be considered to be Surat al-Nās.

Surat al-Nās instructs man to seek refuge in God from the misguidance of Shaytan, and Surat al-Fātiḥah teaches man to proactively seek true guidance, and avoid the path of those who have incurred God's wrath and those who have gone astray.

Both chapters emphasize the same attributes of God; that He is the *Rabb*, *Malik* (or *Mālik*) and the only deity worthy of worship.

⁶ Majlisī, *Bihār*, 89/235.

عَنِ الصَّادِقِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) - السُّورَةُ الَّتِي أَوَّلُهَا تَحْمِيدٌ وَأَوْسَطُهَا إِخْلَاصٌ وَآخِرُهَا دُعَاءُ سُورَةِ النَّاسِ.

MERITS OF THE CHAPTER

- Surat al-Fāṭihah must be recited in each of the first two units of every obligatory and optional prayer for the prayer to be valid. A famous tradition from the Prophet (s) states: There is no prayer for the one who does not recite the *Fāṭihat al-kitāb*.⁷

In optional prayers, it suffices to recite just Surat al-Fāṭihah. In this regard, a tradition from the Prophet (s) states: *Umm al-Qur'an* can replace other chapters but it cannot be replaced by them.⁸

- A tradition from Imam al-Ridha (a) states: ...The reason [every] prayer begins with Surat al-Ḥamd, rather than any other chapter, is because there is no passage in the Qur'an in which goodness and wisdom has been gathered like it has been gathered in Surat al-Ḥamd.⁹

A tradition from the Prophet (s) states: God, the Almighty, informed me, "I have divided the *Fāṭihat al-kitāb* between me and My servant; half of it is for Me and half of it is for My servant, and My servant shall receive whatever he asks for."

When the servant says, "*In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful*", God, the Almighty, responds, "My servant began with My Name, so it becomes incumbent on Me to complete his affairs for him and bless him in his endeavours."

And when he says, "*All [grateful] praise is due to God, Lord of the worlds*", God, the Almighty, responds, "My servant has praised Me, and realizes that the blessings he possesses have come from Me, and the misfortune that I have averted from him is from My favour. I call you [angels] to all witness that I shall add the blessings of the Hereafter to the blessings of this world for him, and I shall avert the misfortunes of the Hereafter from him just as I have averted from him the misfortunes of this world."

And when he says, "*The Beneficent, the Merciful*," God, the Almighty, responds, "My servant has testified that I am the Beneficent, the

⁷ 'Āmili, *Wasā'il*, 4/732; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 18,745.

عن الرسول (صلى الله عليه وآله) - لا صلاة لمن لم يقرأ بفاتحة الكتاب.

⁸ Ṭabrisī, *al-Bayān*, 1/87.

عن الرسول (صلى الله عليه وآله) - أم القرآن عوض عن غيرها، وليس غيرها عوضاً عنها.

⁹ Ṣadūq, *al-Faṣīḥ*, 1/310; 'Āmili, *Wasā'il*, 6/38.

عن الرضا (عليه السلام) - إنما يبدئ بالحمد دون سائر السور، لأنه ليس شيء من القرآن والكلام جمع فيه من خواص الخيم والمكمنات ما جمع في سورة الحمد.

Merciful. I call you all to witness that I will certainly increase his share of My mercy and certainly expand his allocation from My blessings.”

And when he says, “*Master of the Day of Judgment*,” God, the Almighty, responds, “I call you all to witness that just as he acknowledges that I am the Master of the Day of Judgment, I shall certainly make his accounting easy on the Day of Reckoning, and I shall certainly overlook his sinful acts.”

And when he says, “*You [alone] do we worship*,” God, the Almighty, responds, “My servant spoke the truth. He does worship only Me. I call you all to witness that in return for this [sincere] worship, I shall reward him in such a way that everyone who opposed him in his worship of Me will envy him.”

And when he says, “*and You [alone] do we ask for help*,” God, the Almighty, responds, “My servant has asked Me for help and turned to Me. I call you all to witness that I will support him in his affairs, and come to his aid when he is in hardship, and on the Day when he will be in difficulties, I will take his hand.”

And when he says, “*Guide us on the straight (correct) path...*” to the end of the chapter, God, the Almighty, responds, “This is [granted] for My servant, and My servant shall have what he seeks. I have responded to My servant, granted his wishes, and secured him from what he fears.”¹⁰

This beautiful narration highlights the fact that God’s connection to His creation is constant and intimate.

¹⁰ Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā’il*, 4/327; ‘Uyūn Akhbār, 1/300.

عن الرسول (صلى الله عليه وآله) - قال الله عز وجل: فَمَنْ شَرَفَ الْكِتَابَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ عَبْدِي، فَبُصِّفْهُ لِي وَبُصِّفْهُ لِعَبْدِي، وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ إِذَا قَالَ الْعَبْدُ: «بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ» قَالَ اللَّهُ جلَّ جلاله: بَدَأَ عَبْدِي بِاسْمِي، وَخَلَعَ عَلَيَّ أَنْ أَنْتَمَ لَهُ الشُّوْرَةُ وَأَتَارَكَ لَهُ فِي أَخْوَالِهِ، فَمَازَا قَالَ: (الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ) قَالَ اللَّهُ جلَّ جلاله: حَمَدَنِي عَبْدِي، وَعَلِمَ أَنَّ النِّعَمَ الَّتِي لَهُ مِنْ عِبْدِي، وَأَنَّ الْبَلَاءَ الَّتِي دَفَعْتُ عَنْهُ لِيُطَوِّلَ، أَشْهَدُكُمْ أَنِّي أَضِيفُ لَهُ إِلَى نِعَمِ الدُّنْيَا نِعَمَ الْآخِرَةِ، وَأَذْنَعُ عَنْهُ بَلَاءَ الْآخِرَةِ كَمَا دَفَعْتُ عَنْهُ بَلَاءَ الدُّنْيَا، فَمَازَا قَالَ: (الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ) قَالَ اللَّهُ جلَّ جلاله: شَهِدَ لِي بِأَنَّ الرَّحْمَنَ الرَّحِيمَ، أَشْهَدُكُمْ لَأَوْفَرُ مِنْ رَحْمَتِي خَطَّةً، وَلَأَجَزَلُ مِنْ عَطَائِي نَصِيئَةً، فَمَازَا قَالَ: (مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ) قَالَ اللَّهُ جلَّ جلاله: أَشْهَدُكُمْ - كَمَا اعْتَرَفَ عَبْدِي - أَنِّي مَالِكُ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ، لَأَسْهَلُ يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ حِسَابَهُ، وَلَأَتَخَاوَرُ عَنْ سَيِّئِهِ. فَمَازَا قَالَ: (إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ) قَالَ اللَّهُ عز وجل: صَدَّقَ عَبْدِي إِتَائِي بِعَبْدِي، أَشْهَدُكُمْ لَأَبْسَنُ عَلَى عِبَادَتِي نَوَافٍ يَحْطِئُ كُلُّ مَنْ خَالَفَهُ فِي عِبَادَتِي لِي، فَمَازَا قَالَ: (وإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ) قَالَ اللَّهُ عز وجل: بِي اسْتَعَانَ وَإِلَى النِّجَا، أَشْهَدُكُمْ لَأَعِزُّهُ عَلَى أَمْرِهِ وَلَأَعِزُّهُ فِي شِدَائِهِ، وَلَأَحْلُذُ بِتَوْبِهِ يَوْمَ تَوَابِهِ، فَمَازَا قَالَ: (اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ) إِلَى آخِرِ الشُّوْرَةِ، قَالَ اللَّهُ عز وجل: هَذَا لِعَبْدِي، وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ، فَكُنْ اسْتَجَبْتُ لِعَبْدِي، وَأَعْطَيْتُهُ مَا أَسْأَلَ، وَأَمْنْتُهُ بِمَا بَدَأَ وَجَلَّ.

MERITS OF RECITATION

- A tradition from the Prophet (s) states that this is the best chapter of the Qur'an, and its recitation carries the reward of reciting two-thirds of the Qur'an, and in another report, the reward of reciting the whole of the Qur'an.¹¹
- A tradition from Imam al-Baqir (a) states: The one who is not cured by (reciting) Surat al-Ḥamd will not be cured by anything else.¹² It is possible that this narration is referring to the diseases of the heart rather than the body.

THE MERITS OF *BASMALAH*

- A tradition from the Prophet (s) states: Whoever wants to be secure from the nineteen guardians of Hell, should recited the *basmalah*, for it has nineteen letters. Every letter of the phrase will be a shield from one of the guardians.¹³ These guardians have been mentioned in Q74:30:

عَلَيْهَا تِسْعَةَ عَشَرَ

Over it (hellfire) are nineteen [guardians].

- Another tradition from the Prophet (s) states: When the teacher instructs a child, "Say: *Bismillah al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*", and the child repeats, "*Bismillah al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*", God writes immunity [from hellfire] for the child, immunity for his parents, and immunity for the teacher.¹⁴
- A tradition from the Prophet (s) also states: When a servant recites, '*Bismillah al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*' before going to sleep, God says,

¹¹ Ṭabrisī, *al-Bayān*, 1/88; Hindī, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, 1/556.

عَنِ الرَّسُولِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) - نَائِمَةُ الْكِتَابِ تُغْدِلُ ثَلَاثِي الْقُرْآنِ [...] حَتَّى تَرَى الْقُرْآنَ.

¹² Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 2/624.

عَنِ الْبَاقِرِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) - مَنْ لَمْ يَتْلُ الْحَمْدَ، لَمْ يَتْرَكْ شَيْءًا.

¹³ Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, 4/387.

عَنِ الرَّسُولِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) - مَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَنْجُوَ مِنَ الزَّانِبَةِ التَّسْعَةِ عَشَرَ، فَلْيَقْرَأْ: «بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ»، فَإِنَّهَا تِسْعَةُ عَشَرَ حَرْفًا، لِيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ كُلَّ حَرْفٍ مِنْهَا جَنَّةً مِنْ وَاجِدٍ مِنْهُمْ.

¹⁴ 'Āmilī, *Wasā'il*, 6/169.

عَنِ الرَّسُولِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) - أَنَّهُ إِذَا قَالَ الْمُتَعَلِّمُ لِلصَّبِيِّ قُلْ: «بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ»، فَقَالَ الصَّبِيُّ: «بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ»، كَتَبَ اللَّهُ بَرَاءَةً لِلصَّبِيِّ وَبَرَاءَةً لِأَبَوَيْهِ وَبَرَاءَةً لِلْمُعَلِّمِ.

“O My angels, record [reward for] every breath he takes until the morning.”¹⁵

- Beginning every work in the name of God is highly recommended. It is the *sunnah* (practice) of God, Who has begun every chapter of His Book with the *basmalah*, except Surat al-Tawbah (9).

In this manner, servants are taught to observe this practice in all their activities.

Sometimes, the number 786, which is the total of the letters of the *basmalah* according to the *abjad* numerology system, is used as an abbreviation, but there is no particular recommendation for this practice in Shi'i traditions.

The practice of starting with the *basmalah* ensures that deeds become Godly and blessed by Allah. Then, these works would persist and not be nullified or remain unfinished. Indeed, when any transient, limited, and insignificant act is connected to God, it becomes everlasting, unlimited, and significant.

A tradition from the Prophet (s) states: Any work that is not begun with the *basmalah* is cut off from goodness (*abtar*).¹⁶ For this reason Muslims are encouraged to begin every act, such as going out of the home, making supplications, eating food, and even sleep, with *basmalah*.

EXEGESIS

VERSE 1

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿١﴾

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.[1]

- 1.1 This important verse, abbreviated from the first four consonants of the phrase to *basmalah* (بِسْمَلَّة), occurs 114 times in the Qur'an. It is found at the head of every chapter except Surat al-Tawbah, and appears twice in Surat al-Naml (the second time in Q27:30).

¹⁵ Majlisī, *Biḥār*, 89/258.

عَنِ الرَّسُولِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) - إِذَا قَالَ الْعَبْدُ عِنْدَ مَنَاقِبِهِ: «بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ»، يَقُولُ اللَّهُ مَلَائِكَتِي أَكْتُبُوا نَفْسَهُ إِلَى الصَّبَاحِ.

¹⁶ Majlisī, *Biḥār*, 89/242.

عَنِ الرَّسُولِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) - كُلُّ أَمْرٍ ذِي نَالٍ لَمْ يَذْكُرْ فِيهِ «بِسْمِ اللَّهِ» فَهُوَ أَهْتَرُ.

1.2 The *basmalah* in the beginning of the Qur'an and at the head of every surah indicates that the Qur'an and the contents of every chapter are a manifestation of God's mercy.

1.3 There is a difference of opinion amongst Muslims about the inclusion of the *basmalah* in the beginning of the chapters of the Qur'an. The main views are the following:

The Shafi'is and Hanbalis believe the *basmalah* to be part of only Surat al-Hamd and not any other chapter, except verse 30 of Surat al-Naml.¹⁷

The Malikis and Hanafis do not consider the *basmalah* to be part of revelation, except in verse 30 of Surat al-Naml. However, in the daily prayers, they allow its recitation silently before Surat al-Hamd.¹⁸

However, the Shi'a Imamis maintain that every chapter (except for al-Tawbah) was revealed with a *basmalah*. God has divided His revelation into discrete parts called surahs, each with a different theme, and each beginning with a *basmalah* that is linked to the theme. In the case of Surat al-Hamd, which contains a supplication, the *basmalah* is taught to be the opening phrase of every successful prayer.¹⁹

1.4 [*Bi* (بِ, in, with)]. The preposition at the head of the *basmalah* is related to the implied verb, 'I begin', indicating the intention to seek Divine help, which is reiterated in the fifth verse, *إِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ* (You alone do we ask for help).

1.5 In the *tafsīr* attributed to Imam al-Askari (a) he is reported to have said: *Bismillāh* means, "I seek God's help in every single thing I do."²⁰

1.6 [*Ism* (اسم, name)]: There are two possibilities for the root of this term:

i) *wasama*, meaning a sign, because the name of a thing points to it and identifies it.

ii) *samawa*, meaning superiority and dominance, because the name of everything encompasses and governs it. (It is for this reason that parents must take care to give their children good names.

¹⁷ Nawawī, *al-Majmū'*, 3/334.

¹⁸ Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, 1/93.

¹⁹ *al-Mizān*, 1/17.

²⁰ 'Āmilī, *Wasā'il*, 7/169.

A tradition from Imam Ali (a) states: The right of a child over his or her parents is that they give them a good name.²¹⁾

In any case, some scholars consider the second possibility to be the stronger one, because the plural of *ism* is *asmā'*, which conforms to this root.²²

- 1.7 [Allah (الله, God)]: The name Allah is known as the *Lafz al-Jalālah* (the word of Majesty), and is exclusive to God, referring to His exalted Essence. It is the most frequently used name for God in the Qur'an, occurring almost 2,700 times.
- 1.8 Each of the names of God (over 140 are mentioned in the Qur'an) points to an attribute of His infinite perfection from one aspect. However, the name 'Allah' encapsulates all His perfect attributes, and every Divine Name points to it.
- 1.9 According to some reports, the name 'Allah' is the greatest name of God (*ism al-a'zam*).²³ While according to others, the entire *basmalah* is the *ism al-a'zam*. A tradition from Imam al-Ridha (a) states: The phrase '*Bismillah al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*' is closer to the greatest name of God (*ism al-a'zam*) than the white of the eye is to its black part.²⁴
- 1.10 The name 'Allah' was known in pre-Islamic times, and was used by the idolaters. Q43:87 states:

وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ

And if you should ask them who created them,
they would certainly say: Allah...

Originally this term was *al-Ilāh* (the worshipped), and the *hamza* was later assimilated to give the name Allah. *Ilāh* is the verbal noun of *aliha*, which means 'to worship', or 'be captivated', and because it has the meaning of the passive participle (*ism al-maf'ūl*), Allah means 'One who is worshipped (*ma'būd*)', or 'About Whom all are perplexed and captivated (*mutaḥayyirun fihi*)'.²⁵ Imam al-Sajjad (a) uses the

²¹ *Nahj al-Balāghah*, saying no. 399.

عَنْ أَبِيهِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) - خَلَقَ الْوَلَدَ عَلَى الْوَالِدِ أَنْ يُحْبِبَ اسْمَهُ.

²² Ṭabrisī, *al-Bayān*, 1/91.

²³ Kāshānī, *al-Ṣāfi*, 1/81; Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 14/28.

²⁴ 'Āmilī, *Wasā'il*, 6/60.

عَنِ الرَّفَا (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) - «بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ» أَقْرَبُ إِلَى اسْمِ اللَّهِ الْأَعْظَمِ مِنْ بَيَاضِ النَّيِّزِ إِلَى سَوَادِهِ.

²⁵ Javādī-Āmolī, *Tasnīm*, 1/215.

second meaning in one of his supplications, saying: "O Allah, the hearts of the humble are captivated by you."²⁶

1.11 Many scholars consider 'Allah' to be a proper noun because it is never used as an adjective to any other name, nor is a verb derived from it used to describe other names.²⁷ It is used as the Arabic equivalent of God by Muslims and non-Muslims alike (for example in the Arabic Bible).

1.12 [*Al-Raḥmān* الرَّحْمَن and *al-Raḥīm* الرَّحِيم (merciful)]. Derived from the root *r-ḥ-m*, both these two names are hyperbolic, or intensive, forms (*al-ṣīghah al-mubālaghah*) of the noun, *raḥmah* (mercy). However, *raḥmah* is more than mercy in the meaning of compassion, for example when a soldier chooses to spare his enemy, or when one shows pity on someone less fortunate. It has a wider meaning, which is the desire to provide assistance to someone who is suffering from a deficiency which he cannot remove by himself.

As an attribute of God it denotes granting assistance in order to fulfil every need of the creation to achieve their potential.²⁸

1.13 *Raḥmah* includes unconditional care, love and mercy. For example, the womb of the mother is called *raḥim* because she provides everything the baby needs, even as the baby causes her pain and distress.

1.14 These two attributes may have been chosen over God's other attributes because it is more fitting to begin every work by relying on that attribute which encompasses everything else in creation as well. Q7:156 states:

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

... And My mercy embraces all things...

1.15 Although both *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm* are attributes of God derived from *raḥmah*, the reason *al-Raḥmān* precedes *al-Raḥīm* is because *al-Raḥmān* is a name reserved solely for God, while *al-Raḥīm* can refer to others as well.²⁹

²⁶ Majlisī, *Biḥār*, 97/264, *Ziyārat Aminullāh* of Imam Ali (a).

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ قُلُوبَ الْمُخْبِتِينَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَيْهِ.

²⁷ Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān*, 1/19.

²⁸ Ibid, 1/20.

²⁹ Ṭabrasī, *al-Bayān*, 1/94.

A tradition from Imam al-Sadiq (a) states: *al-Raḥmān* is a specific attribute [of God] which encompasses everything, while *al-Raḥīm* is a general attribute which encompasses a specific group.³⁰

1.16 *Al-Raḥmān* denotes the One whose widespread and general mercy surrounds all of mankind, both believers and disbelievers. The manifestation of this mercy is God's role as Sustainer, Lord, Creator of the natural order, Healer, Responder to prayers, etc.

1.17 *Al-Raḥīm* denotes God's eternal and continuous mercy on His creation. The manifestation of this mercy is God's legislative guidance, His guardianship, His intercession, His eternal rewards in heaven for those who were not defiant and submitted to the truth, etc.

Therefore, as stated by Imam al-Sadiq (a) in one narration, *al-Raḥmān* denotes God's general mercy to all of His creation, and *al-Raḥīm* denotes His special and perpetual mercy to those who believe in Him.³¹ And this special mercy will be manifested most clearly on the Day of Judgment.

1.18 In fact, God's *rahmah* will be more manifest on the Day of Judgment than it has ever been before. A tradition from the Prophet (s) states: God, the Almighty, has one-hundred doors of mercy, one of which He sent down to the earth and distributed amongst His creation. Through this, they display care and mercy to one another. He kept the other ninety-nine with Himself and will manifest them to His servants on the Day of Resurrection.³²

SUMMARY OF THE VERSE

In summary, beginning every action with the *basmalah* enables the believer to fulfil the purpose of his creation which is to perform every act for the pleasure of God, in the manner that He has instructed. And in this way, everything he does becomes an act of worship as stated in Q51:56:

³⁰ Ḥuwayzī, *Nūr al-Thaqalayn*, 1/14.

عَنِ الصَّادِقِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) - «الرَّحْمَنُ» اسْمٌ خَاصٌّ بِصِفَةِ غَائِبٍ، وَ«الرَّحِيمُ» اسْمٌ عَامٌّ بِصِفَةِ خَاصَّةٍ.

³¹ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1/114.

عَنِ الصَّادِقِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) - «الرَّحْمَنُ» بِمَجْمُوعِ خَلْقِهِ، وَ«الرَّحِيمُ» بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ خَاصَّةً.

³² Kāshānī, *al-Ṣāfī*, 1/82.

عَنِ النَّبِيِّ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) - إِنَّ فِيَّ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مِائَةَ رَحْمَةٍ أُنْزِلَ بِهَا وَاجِدَةٌ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ، فَتُسَمَّى بِرَحْمَتِهِ، فَبِهَا يَتَغَاطَّوْنَ وَيَتَرَحَّمُونَ، وَأَخْرَجَ تَشْعًا وَيُسَمَّى لِلْقَبْرِ بِرَحْمَتِهِمَا عِبَادَةُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

And I have not created the jinn and the men
except that they should worship me

Beginning every action with God's name naturally forestalls a person from committing a deed that would displease Him. Thus, this practice is an important pledge and self-reminder to avoid conduct that would displease Allah.

The *basmalah* is the emblem and brand of a Muslim. A tradition states that when Imam al-Ridha (a) was asked about the meaning of *bismillāh*, he said: When the speaker utters the *basmalah*, it means, "I mark myself with a brand (*al-simah*) from the brands of God, the Almighty. And that is true servitude (*al-‘ubūdiyyah*)."³³

REFLECTIVE LEARNING

The help we need in the action that we are beginning with the *basmalah*, will come from a particular attribute of God, for example, *al-Hādī* for guidance, *al-‘Ālim* for knowledge, *al-Razzāq* for sustenance, *al-Qādir* for strength, and so on.

Let me reflect on the specific attribute of God I am invoking in each particular action. In this regard, the supplication *Du‘ā’ al-Jawshan al-Kabīr* would be especially helpful as it mentions 1,000 Divine attributes.

With the *basmalah*, we begin our task in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful, with the expectation of success through His Mercy. For this expectation to become a reality, we too need to manifest the attribute of mercy within our task. Let me reflect on how much mercy (which could be in the form of 'tough-love' in matters of discipline) I show to others in my actions.

The recitation of *basmalah* is a good start to any action but loses its true value when done without presence of mind. If we were to live the *basmalah*, it would have the following consequences:

1. The action now becomes worship (*‘ibādah*), done solely for God's pleasure (*ikhhlās*), in the way He wants, and is thus stamped with His 'logo'. Now it has acquired great value.

³³ Ṣadūq, *Uyūn Akhbār*, 1/260.

قَالَ: سَأَلْتُ الرِّضَا (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) عَنْ «بِسْمِ اللَّهِ»، قَالَ: مَعْنَى قَوْلِ الْقَائِلِ «بِسْمِ اللَّهِ» أَنِّي أَسِيمُ عَلَى نَفْسِي بِسْمَةِ مَنْ يَمُنُّ بِاللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَهُوَ «الْعُبُودِيَّة».

2. The action is commenced with hope of success in Godly terms, trusting in His favour and mercy; therefore, one does not have to worry about the outcome.

Let me reflect on whether these two consequences are found within my own actions.

VERSE 2

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾

All [grateful] praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds. [2]

- 2.1 The *alif* and *lām* at the beginning of the word *al-ḥamd* denotes universal inclusion and exclusivity (*al-istighrāq*), and therefore means ‘all praise’, and not ‘the praise’. It means that every praise returns to God. Whoever praises anyone at any moment and in any language is ultimately praising and thanking God, the Source of that perfection.³⁴

- 2.2 *Al-Ḥamd* is a noun, and so is not associated with a time or a doer, as a verb would be. No command has been given to praise God, rather the phrase is presented as a fact and reality, that all praise only belongs to Him.

- 2.3 [*Al-Ḥamd*, (الحمد, grateful praise)]: *Ḥamd* denotes praise with a sense of gratitude. (The difference between *ḥamd* and gratitude (*shukr*), is that *ḥamd* is praise by the tongue and heart, while *shukr* can be displayed by action also. Its distinction from *madḥ*, another word for praise, is that *ḥamd* is only used for one who displays a quality openly and with intent, while *madḥ* is used for one who may display a quality without intent, such as beauty.³⁵

In summary, *ḥamd* includes *madḥ* (praise) and *shukr* (gratitude) to God. While *madḥ* or *shukr* to others is permissible, *ḥamd* is exclusively for God alone, which is why the verse says ‘*al-ḥamdu lillāh*’.

- 2.4 It has been highly recommended in many traditions to recite this verse constantly. Of course, this is with an understanding of its meaning and consequences. Some of these traditions are presented below:

A tradition from Imam Ali (a) states: All praise and gratitude (*ḥamd*) is for Allah, who made *ḥamd* the key to His remembrance, the cause

³⁴ Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān*, 1/19.

³⁵ Rāghib, *al-Mufradāt*.

of increase from His grace, and the means to acknowledge His blessings and His Greatness.³⁶

A tradition from Imam al-Sadiq (a) states: Whoever recites this verse four times when he awakes in the morning has professed gratitude for his day, and whoever recites it four times in the evening has professed gratitude for his night.³⁷

A tradition from Imam al-Ridha (a) says: The statement, '*al-ḥamdu lillāh*' is only a fulfilment of the gratitude that God has made obligatory on the creation; gratitude for the goodness that He has allowed His servant to attain.³⁸

2.5 Indeed, *al-ḥamdu lillāh* is a comprehensive statement of gratitude. It is narrated that once, when Imam al-Sadiq (a) came out of the mosque, he saw that his mount was missing. He said, "If God returns it to me, I will certainly thank Him in the manner that He deserves." The animal was found a short time later, and the Imam (a) said, "*Al-ḥamdu lillāh!*" Someone said to him, "May I be sacrificed for you! Did you not say that you would thank God in the manner that He deserves?" The Imam (a) replied, "Did you not hear me say *al-ḥamdu lillāh*?"³⁹

2.6 Indeed, this will remain the call of the believers even when they enter Paradise *inshā'Allah*. Q10:10 states:

وَأَخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

...The conclusion of their call shall be,
"All [grateful] praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds."

³⁶ Nahj al-Balāghah, sermon 157.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الْحَمْدَ مِفْتَاحًا لِلْكَرَمِ، وَنَسَبًا لِلْفَرِيدِ مِنْ فَطْرِهِ، وَدَلِيلًا عَلَى الْإِلَهِ وَعَظِيمَةً.

³⁷ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 2/503.

عَنِ الصَّادِقِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) - مَنْ قَالَ أَرْبَعَ مَرَّاتٍ إِذَا أَصْبَحَ «الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ» نَفَذَ أَذَى شُكْرِ يَوْمِهِ، وَمَنْ قَالَهَا إِذَا أَمْسَى نَفَذَ أَذَى شُكْرِ لَيْلِيهِ.

³⁸ 'Āmili, *Wasā'il*, 6/38.

عَنِ الرِّضَا (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) - أَنْ قَوْلَهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: «الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ» إِنَّمَا هُوَ أَذَى لَنَا أَوْجِبَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلَى خَلْقِهِ مِنَ الشُّكْرِ وَشُكْرُ لَنَا وَفَقْدَ عِبَادَةٍ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ.

³⁹ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 2/97.

عَنِ الصَّادِقِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) - خَرَجَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ وَقَدْ ضَاعَتْ دَابَّتُهُ، فَقَالَ: لَيْسَ رَدْعَا اللَّهِ عَلَيَّ لِأَشْكُرُ اللَّهَ خَيْرَ شُكْرًا، قَالَ: مِمَّا لَيْسَ أَذَى لِي، فَقَالَ: «الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ»، فَقَالَ لَهُ قَائِلٌ: جَعَلْتَ فِذَاكَ الْبَيِّنَ قُلْتَ لِأَشْكُرُ اللَّهَ خَيْرَ شُكْرًا؟ فَقَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): أَلَمْ تَسْمَعْني قُلْتَ «الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ».

- 2.7 *Al-ḥamdu lillāh* is followed by mention of four attributes of God: His Lordship, His general mercy, His special mercy, and His undeniable authority on the Day of Judgment, which indicates that on account of these Divine attributes, man has to express *ḥamd* to God.
- 2.8 [*Rabb* (رَبّ, Lord)]: This term is used for one who has authority and ownership of something, and also plays a role in its development and sustenance.⁴⁰
- 2.9 It should be noted that on its own, the term *Rabb* is only used for God, the Almighty. When used for other than Him, it is always annexed to another noun or pronoun (*al-idāfah*), for example, *rabb al-dār* (owner of the house).⁴¹
- 2.10 God is *al-Rabb*, the true Sustainer. Unlike other sustainers (*arbāb*), He is neither limited in His power to sustain, nor in His wisdom to know what is required, nor in His love and care, nor in His ability to provide adequately and abundantly.
- 2.11 [*‘Ālamīn* (عَالَمِينَ, worlds)]: It is the plural of *‘ālam*, which itself is pluralistic in meaning, referring to all sentient beings, and more generally, the whole world of creation.⁴² This meaning is made clear by Prophet Musa’s (a) debate with Fir‘awn, which is described in Q26:23,24

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا

Fir‘awn asked, “What is the Lord of the worlds (‘ālamīn)?”
He [Musa] replied, “The Lord of the heavens and the earth,
and all that is between them...”

- 2.12 The phrase, *Rabb al-‘ālamīn*, reminds man that he is but one small part of the great multitude of creatures that God sustains. However, while he is a single individual, what he has in common with everyone else is that they all have the same Lord. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why he has been taught in this chapter to supplicate to God by using the plural ‘we’ even when praying on his own.

⁴⁰ Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, *al-Mīzān*, 1/20.

⁴¹ Ṭabṛasī, *al-Bayān*, 1/96.

⁴² Ibid.

SUMMARY OF THE VERSE

In summary, this verse declares that since God is the essence of perfection and His actions are independent of any assistance, He alone is deserving of true praise as the Sustainer and all-Wise Cherisher of the worlds. If anything other than Him deserves praise, it is as a consequence of something that He has granted, so the praise ultimately returns to Him.

REFLECTIVE LEARNING

Al-ḥamdu lillāh should be on our lips at every moment. A tradition from Imam al-Sadiq (a) states: When the Prophet (s) was pleased at an outcome, he would say, “*Al-ḥamdu lillāh* for this blessing,” and when he was disappointed at an outcome, he would say, “*Al-ḥamdu lillāh* in every situation.”⁴³

Let me reflect whether I say *al-ḥamdu lillāh* in every situation, good or bad, following this *sunnah* of the Prophet (s).

We think of *al-ḥamdu lillāh* only as a statement of gratitude for blessings we have received, whereas it should be something on our mind in every situation.

Let me reflect when I say *al-ḥamdu lillāh*, do I really mean it and am I truly thanking God, or do I say it with some lingering dissatisfaction or complaint?

VERSE 3

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٣﴾

The Beneficent, the Merciful. [3]

3.1 The repetition of the two attributes *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm* in this verse is for emphasis, and also to give a reason for the praise and gratefulness expressed in the previous verse, ‘*Al-ḥamdu lillāh*’.⁴⁴

3.2 It is a reminder for man to model his life on the attribute of mercy. A tradition from the Prophet (s) states: Model yourself on the

⁴³ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 2/97.

عن الصادق (عليه السلام) - كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِذَا وَرَدَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرٌ يُسْرُهُ قَالَ: «الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى هَذِهِ النِّعْمَةِ»، وَإِذَا وَرَدَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرٌ يَغْنَمُ بِهِ قَالَ: «الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ».

⁴⁴ Tabrasi, *al-Bayān*, 1/97.

morals (*akhlāq*) of God. Indeed, most people shall enter Paradise due their God-wariness (*taqwā*) and good morals (*ḥusn al-khulq*).⁴⁵

3.3 This verse is also a prelude to the next verse, which switches from God's attribute of beauty (*jamāl*) to His attribute of majesty (*jalāl*), reassuring the believers that the justice of God is preceded by His mercy. Imam al-Sajjad (a) quotes the Prophet (s) in one of his supplications: "O He whose mercy precedes His wrath."⁴⁶

3.4 However, the next verse reminds us about the accountability of actions that is a part of God's justice. The attitude of hope and fear must go hand in hand, and encouragement and warning are both required to keep man on the straight path. God's Messengers (a) were always sent as both bearers of glad tidings as well as warners. For example, Q6:48 states:

وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ

And We do not send the messengers except as bringers of good tidings [for the righteous] and warners [for the sinners]...

3.5 In a supplication attributed to Imam al-Mahdi (af), he states: "I have conviction that You are the most Merciful of the merciful in situations of pardon and mercy, and the strictest of punishers in situations that deserve chastisement and retribution."⁴⁷

SUMMARY OF THE VERSE

In summary, this verse, which is recited constantly in every prayer, reminds man that God's mercy encompasses him at all times. Indeed, God has created mankind to experience His mercy. Q11:119 states:

إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ رَبُّكَ وَلِذَلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ

Except those whom your Lord has given mercy [through guidance], and for that did He create them...

⁴⁵ *Akhlāq-i Muḥtashamī*, p. 249.

عن الرسول (صلى الله عليه وآله) - تخلقوا بأخلاق الله، إن أكثر الناس يدخلون الجنة يتقوى الله وخشى الخلق.

⁴⁶ *Du'ā' al-Jawshan al-Kabīr*.

يا من سبقت رحمته غضبه.

⁴⁷ *Du'ā' al-Iftitāḥ*.

وأنقذت أنك أنت أرحم الراحمين في موضع العلم والرحمة وأشد المتعاقبين في موضع النكال والنجاة.

REFLECTIVE LEARNING

God shows us mercy even when we are not deserving of it. Let me reflect on whether I have also adopted this quality of showing mercy to someone who is not deserving, or when I have the upper hand.

In *Du'ā' al-Jawshan al-Kabīr* we acknowledge that God's mercy precedes His wrath. Let me learn from this, and resolve to act with mercy whenever I am overcome by anger.

Do I observe the balance between hope and fear; hope of His mercy at the time of seeking forgiveness, and fear of His wrath before committing a sin?

VERSE 4

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٤﴾

Master of the Day of Judgment.

- 4.1 [*Mālik* (مَالِك, Master)]. The Mastership of God on that Day will be an undeniable reality, accompanied by absolute ownership, control and dominion. Real ownership is when the thing owned can have no independent existence from the owner. For example, we are the owners and masters of our limbs and faculties, but they only exist due to our existence, and not independently of us.¹⁸
- 4.2 Of course, God is *Mālik* in this world as well as the next. However, in this world, people are often oblivious to the true reality of things, and create various authorities and masters for themselves. But on that Day, the veils of confusion are lifted from before everyone's eyes. Q50:22 states:

لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِنْ هَذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ

[It will be said:] You were certainly heedless of this [while in the world], and now We have removed from you your veil, so on this Day, your sight is piercing.

And because of their clear insight no-one will be able to deny His Majesty. Q40:16 states:

لِمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ

¹⁸ Tabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān*, 1/21.

...To Whom belongs the kingdom this Day?
To Allah, the One, the Vanquisher!

- 4.3 The absolute authority of God and the consequences of His judgment will be clear on that Day when everyone will be helpless before God, waiting for His decision about their fate. Q82:17-19 state in this regard:

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ﴿١٧﴾ ثُمَّ مَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ﴿١٨﴾
يَوْمَ لَا تَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِنَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَالْأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلَّهِ

And what will make you realize what the [reality of the] Day of Judgment is? Again, what will make you realize what the [unimaginable] Day of Judgment is? It is the Day when no person will have the power to do anything for another; and the command on that Day will be [wholly] with God.

Similarly, a tradition from Imam Ali (a) states: As for His words, 'Master of the Day of Judgment', He will have control over the forelock of every creature on the Day of Judgment. He will cause everyone who was defiant and oppressive in the world to enter into hellfire, and they will not be able to escape the punishment of God. As for those who were obedient, steadfast, and careful about obeying God, He shall enter them into Paradise out of His mercy.⁴⁹

- 4.4 Reciting 'Malik (مَلِك, Sovereign, Lord)' instead of 'Mālik (مَالِك, Master, Owner)' in the prayers is allowed by the jurists, because it is one of the accepted seven recitation styles (*qirā'āt al-sab'a*) of the Qur'an. For example, a *fatwā* states: [In one's *salat*] It is permissible to recite either 'Māliki yawm al-dīn (مَالِكِ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ)' or 'Maliki yawm al-dīn (مَلِكِ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ)'.⁵⁰ Although the two words have different meanings, they both are attributes of Allah, who is both the Sovereign Lord and the Master of creation.
- 4.5 [Al-Dīn (الدِّين, religion)] literally means recompense, and because recompense depends on the obedience and disobedience of God's commandments, it has come to mean the religion that God has sent

⁴⁹ Daylamī, *Irshād al-Qulūb*, 2/365.

عَنْ أَبِيهِ الْمُؤَيَّبِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) - وَأَمَّا قَوْلُهُ: "مَالِكِ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ" فَهُوَ نَسْبُكَ نَوَاصِي الْخَلْقِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ، وَكُلُّ مَنْ كَانَ شَاكًا أَوْ جَبَّارًا أَدْخَلَهُ النَّارَ، وَلَا يَنْتَفِعُ مِنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ شَيْءٌ وَلَا جَبَّارٌ، وَكُلُّ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الدُّنْيَا طَائِعًا لِعِبَادَةِ اللَّهِ أَدْخَلَهُ الْجَنَّةَ بِرَحْمَتِهِ.

⁵⁰ Sistānī, *Minhāj*, vol.1, *fatwā* 613.

down. Since the final consequence of actions will only be seen on the Day of Judgment, 'dīn', and 'yawm al-dīn' are used as metaphors for the Final Day, just as stated in Q82:9

كَلَّا بَلْ تُكَذِّبُونَ بِالذِّينِ

*No [the delay in punishment deludes you],
but [in reality] you belie the [Day of] Judgment!*

- 4.6 [Yawm al-dīn (يَوْمَ الدِّينِ, Day of Judgment)] therefore refers to the Day of reckoning, judgment, and recompense. This belief in yawm al-dīn is a foundational tenet of Islam. This Day is a recurring theme in the Qur'an and has been described in different ways depending on the message intended in the verse. It has been called yawm al-qiyāmah (Day of Resurrection, Q2:85), yawm al-ḥisāb (Day of Accounting, Q38:16), yawm al-taghābun (Day of Dispossession, Q64:9), yawm al-faṣl (Day of Separation, Q37:21), yawm al-ākhir (the Last Day, Q2:8), yawm al-jam' (Day of Assembly, Q42:7), yawm al-maw'ūd (the Promised Day, Q85:2), yawm al-ba'th (Day of Rising, Q30:56), yawm al-ḥasrah (Day of Regret, Q19:39), yawm al-ḥaqq (Day of Truth, Q78:39), yawm al-talāq (Day of Meeting, Q40:15), yawm al-wa'id (Day of Warning, Q50:20), yawm al-khulūd (Day of Eternal Life, Q50:34), yawm al-faṭḥ (Day of Victory, Q32:29), yawm al-tanād (Day of Calling, Q40:32), and by several other names such as, al-wāqī'ah (the Inevitable Event, Q56:1), al-ḥāqqah (the Reality, Q69:1), al-sā'ah (the Hour, Q6:31), and al-faza'a al-akbar (the Great Terror, Q21:103). God continually reminds man of the huge significance of that Day. Q2:281 states:

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

*And beware a Day when you will be returned to God.
Then, every soul shall be paid what it has earned,
and they shall not be dealt with unjustly.*

- 4.7 Some exegetes believe that it is called 'yawm al-dīn' because the only thing of value on that Day will be belief and action on the religion (dīn) that God had sent down through His Prophets (a).⁵¹

⁵¹ Ṭabṛasī, *al-Bayān*, 1/100.

SUMMARY OF THE VERSE

In summary, this verse reminds the believer that God will be the undisputed Master and Arbiter of every affair on the Day of Judgment. Belief and conviction in the Final Day is a tenet of faith, serving as a powerful deterrent from sinful conduct for every Muslim.

REFLECTIVE LEARNING

Let me reflect on whether I am acutely aware that Allah is my Master in this world or whether I will wait for the next world to acknowledge the fact.

And if I accept His Mastership here, how is it manifested in my belief and conduct?

VERSE 5

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾

You [alone] do we worship, and You [alone] do we ask for help.

5.1 In this verse, the address changes from the third person (He) to the second person (You).

After introducing Himself and infusing love, recognition, and servitude in the heart of His servant, God now instructs him to address his Lord directly. He teaches him that there is no barrier between the Creator and a lowly servant. This invitation is indeed a great honour.

In one of his supplications Imam al-Sajjad (a) confesses: “My Lord! Were it not incumbent on me to obey Your command, I would declare You too exalted for me to mention You...”⁵²

5.2 The use of *iiyāka* (إِيَّاكَ, You) before the verbs, [*na‘budu* (نَعْبُدُ, we worship)] and [*nasta‘īn* (نَسْتَعِينُ, we ask for help)] is for exclusivity (*inḥiṣār*), and gives the meaning of ‘You alone, and no other’.

5.3 The servant, after having recognized Whom he is supplicating to, addresses his Lord directly, first pledging his worship to Him, and

⁵² Qummī, *Mafātiḥ al-Jinān, Munājāt al-dhākirin* (The whispered prayer of the rememberers).

only then, daring to ask for His support. This support starts from the assistance of God that he will need in keeping his pledge of worshipping Him alone, and then extends to every other need.

- 5.4 By seeking support from God alone, the supplicant has accepted that he is worshipping Him alone as well.⁵³
- 5.5 Declaring one's submission and utter dependence on God is a great lesson in humility and in breaking the ego, because pride and arrogance is despised by God. Q40:60 states:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ

...Indeed, those who are too proud for My worship shall soon enter Hell, abased.

- 5.6 Interestingly, the pronouns for this supplication are mentioned in the plural. This shows the importance of communal progress side by side with individual progress. In fact, the collective wellbeing and progress of a society is the cornerstone of the *sharī'ah*, with great rewards mentioned for all acts that bring the *ummah* closer to one another, such as praying in daily congregation, weekly *Jumu'ah* prayer, the annual Haj, eating together, marriage, and so on. Conversely, there is great sin in actions that would tear the fabric of society, such as cutting off contact with near relatives, backbiting, adultery, and so on.

The use of the collective pronoun, 'we', also creates humility in the supplicant, effacing the tendency of self-importance, and reminding him that he is but one of God's countless creatures.

- 5.7 Additionally, the supplicant acknowledges that on his own, he may not be deserving of God's grace, but he includes himself with the rest of God's servants so as to worship alongside those who are closer to God than him. And this collective supplication is what God instructs as well, as stated in Q24:31:

وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

...And turn to God [in repentance] together, O believers, so that you may be successful.

⁵³ Tabrasī, *al-Bayān*, 1/102.

- 5.8 Sincere worship (*‘ibādah*) and seeking divine assistance (*isti‘ānah*) are manifestations of the praise and gratitude (*ḥamd*) mentioned in the second verse, and in fact are consequences of it.
- 5.9 A tradition states that when he was asked about this verse, Imam al-Ridha (a) said: *Iyyāka na‘budu* is a declaration of love and the desire to get close to God, exalted be His mention, and to dedicate every act solely to Him and no other. *Iyyāka nasta‘in* is asking Him for greater opportunity to do good (*tawfīq*), to worship Him, and seeking the continuation of the blessings God has bestowed upon him, and for His support.⁵⁴
- 5.10 The previous verses alluded to *tawḥīd al-dhāt* (unicity in God’s Essence), by saying that God Alone deserves all praise, and *tawḥīd al-ṣifāt* (unicity in God’s attributes, by mention that God is *al-Rabb*, *al-Raḥmān*, *al-Raḥīm*, and *al-Mālik*). In this verse, there is mention of *tawḥīd al-‘ibādah* and *tawḥīd al-af‘āl*.
- Tawḥīd al-‘ibādah* means not to consider anything or anyone worthy of worship except God, and to bow our heads in submission to Him alone.
- Tawḥīd al-af‘āl* means to believe His to be the only influence in the whole of existence, and the Moving Cause of every cause and effect around us.
- The overall result of this understanding is that man will seek only God, and only from God, devotedly relying on His power, guidance, wisdom, and support.
- 5.11 This verse clearly indicates that there is neither absolute compulsion (*jabr*) on mankind nor complete delegation (*tafwīd*) to them. When we say, ‘You [alone] do we worship’, we do this out of our free will, and when we say, ‘and You [alone] do we ask for help’, we acknowledge our neediness of Him.

SUMMARY OF THE VERSE

In summary, this verse is a pledge and an admission. A pledge to worship God and no other, and an admission that the servant needs assistance from God only, and no one else.

⁵⁴ Ṣadīq, *al-Faḥḥ*, 1/310.

عن الرضا (عليه السلام) - «إياك نعبد» رغبة ونفرت إلى الله تعالى ذكره وإخلاص له بالعمل دون غيره، و«إياك نستعين» استيزادة من توفيقه وعيادته واستينامة لنا أنعم الله عليه ونصره.

REFLECTIVE LEARNING

Worship in practice is submission to God; verbally, in actions and in the heart. Let me reflect on how strong my pledge to God is when I promise to worship Him alone.

Showing neediness to others is humiliating, but showing neediness to God is honourable. Even when people seek assistance from each other, they should realize that the assistance is only through the permission of God.

Let me reflect on whether I realize that when I have a chance to help someone, it is an opportunity and not a burden. And when I reject their request, I lose an opportunity to become God's agent and get closer to Him.

VERSE 6

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٦﴾

Guide us on the straight (correct) path.

6.1 Immediately after saying that he only seeks the help of God, the supplicant is instructed to ask for the greatest gift: the gift of correct guidance.

6.2 [*Ihadinā* (إِهْدِنَا, guide us)] can have several meanings:

- i) Show us the right path. This is a plea for correct guidance even as Muslims. The supplicant beseeches God to always be guided along the correct path, so as to attain His pleasure and proximity. Q10:25 states in this regard:

وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى دَارِ السَّلَامِ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

And God invites to the abode of peace and guides whom He wills to a straight path.

- ii) Keep us on the right path (which will lead to God-wariness (*taqwā*) in this world). What we mean to say here is that although we are presently on the right way, we fear that we will deviate from it unless we have God's constant help. This help is mentioned in Q47:17

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَآتَاهُمْ تَقْوَاهُمْ

As for those who follow guidance, He increases them in guidance, and grants them their [true] God-wariness.

- iii) Reward us for our faith by constantly guiding us. Here what is meant is: guide us so that we reach our potential, perfection, and thereby Paradise. This meaning is mentioned in Q10:9

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِإِيمَانِهِمْ
تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ

*Indeed, those who believe and perform righteous acts,
their Lord will guide them because of their faith;
beneath them rivers will flow in the gardens of bliss.*

Indeed, knowledge can be increased by learning, but that does not guarantee guidance. True guidance can only come from God, and this is acknowledged by the believers as they enter Paradise, as stated in in Q7:43

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلَا أَنْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ

*... And they shall say: Praise [and thanks] be to God,
Who guided us to this. And we would never have been guided
[aright] if God had not [constantly] guided us...*

- 6.3 [*Ṣirāṭ* (صِرَاط, path)]: *Ṣirāṭ* means a clear path, which is expansive and has no deviations,⁵⁵ and [*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* (الصِّرَاطُ الْمُسْتَقِيم, the straight path)] refers to the specific path of the worship of God and obedience of His injunctions. This is evidenced by Q6:161, which states:

قُلْ إِنِّي هَدَانِي رَبِّي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ دِينًا قِيمًا

*Say, 'Indeed, my Lord has guided me to a straight path
(ṣirāṭin mustaqīm), an upright religion...*

- 6.4 The Qur'an has given further information about the straight path in Q6:151-153 by listing several commands: Do not join anything in worship with Him, treat your parents well, do not kill your children because of poverty, do not approach lewd things, whether open or hidden, do not kill an innocent person, do not usurp the wealth of the orphan, give full measure and weight, keep your word, and fulfil the covenant you made with God.

⁵⁵ Rāghib, *al-Mufradāt*.

Thereafter, God states:

وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ
بَيْنَكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ذَلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

Indeed, this [what has been mentioned in these verses] is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, lest they lead you away from His way. This He has instructed you so that you may become God-wary.

- 6.5 The whole of creation is on an existential and compulsory journey back towards God, and man is no exception to this return. This journey can take several pathways, but there is one special path amongst them, *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*. Since man has free will, he can select whatever path he wants to return to His Lord. In addition to free will however, man has also been endowed with the desire to achieve perfection. The supplication, 'Guide us on the straight path,' is in fact a prayer to be guided on the path that will lead him to perfection.⁵⁶
- 6.6 In one tradition, Imam al-Sadiq (a) has explained the meaning of this verse as follows: Guide us towards the straight path. Guide us to follow the path that leads to Your love, and brings us to Your way. [The path that] prevents us from following our base desires thereby harming ourselves, and our personal opinions thereby being ruined.⁵⁷
- 6.7 Accordingly, the straight path has been interpreted in some traditions as the Qur'an, and in others as the path shown by the Ahl al-Bayt (a). This is because only these two can lead man to eternal felicity, as they contain no error and deviation. They are the 'two weighty things (*thaqalayn*)' mentioned in many traditions. According to a widely transmitted (*mutawātir*) report accepted by all Muslims, the Prophet (s) counselled the *ummah*: I am leaving behind two things. If you hold fast on to them you will never go astray: the Book (Qur'an) of God, the Almighty, and my household (Ahl al-Bayt), my progeny.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Muṭahharī, (*Āshnāyī bā Qur'an*), *Āthār*, 26/10.

⁵⁷ 'Āmilī, *Wasā'il*, 27/49.

عَنِ الصَّادِقِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) - فِي قَوْلِهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: «الْهَدْيَ الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ» قَالَ: يَقُولُ أَزِيدُنَا إِلَى الصِّرَاطِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ، أَزِيدُنَا لِلرُّومِ الطَّرِيقَ الْمُرِيدِي إِلَى مَحَبَّتِكَ، وَالْمُبْتَغَى إِلَى دِينِكَ، وَالْمَنَاعَ مِنْ أَنْ تَتَّبِعَ أَهْوَاءَنَا، فَتَنْطَبِ أَوْ تَأْخُذَ بِأَرَائِنَا فَتُهْلِكَ.

⁵⁸ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1/294. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4/1883, similar wording.

عَنِ الرَّسُولِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) - إِنْ تَارَكَ بَيْنَكُمْ أَمْرَيْنِ، إِنْ أَخَذْتُمْ بِهِمَا لَنْ تَضِلُّوا، كِتَابَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَأَهْلَ بَيْتِي بِعِزِّي.

SUMMARY OF THE VERSE

In summary, this verse is a supplication for the most important blessing of God, the gift of correct guidance. Guidance to a straight path that leads to His proximity and pleasure. In short, this path of guidance, *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, is the path of absolute servitude (*‘ubūdiyyah*) to God, just as Q36:61 states:

وَأَنِ اعْبُدُونِي هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

And that you should worship [only] Me. This is the straight path.

REFLECTIVE LEARNING

Let me reflect on:

- What is my evidence of being on the right path?
- What is keeping me on the right path and what might move me away from it?
- Am I constantly working on my journey towards my potential, perfection, and Paradise?

VERSE 7

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٧﴾

The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favours. Not [the path] of those upon whom Your wrath is brought down, nor of those who go astray. [7]

7.1 This verse gives further details of *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, by pointing out examples of those who stayed on it and those who deviated from it. It is a showcase of the concept of *tawallā* (wanting to be with those who have earned God's favour) and *tabarrā* (disassociating from those who have earned God's displeasure and strayed).

7.2 [*An‘amta* (أَنْعَمْتَ, you have bestowed favours)]. Derived from *n‘am*, it means granting favours (*in‘ām*) that give another ease, comfort, and happiness. It is used especially for sentient beings, who can appreciate these favours and use them wisely or unwisely.⁵⁹ God has granted innumerable blessings to all human beings, as stated in Q16:18:

⁵⁹ Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, *al-Mīzān*, 1/28.

وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا

*And if you should count the favours of God,
you could not enumerate them...*

7.3 However, the blessing and favour mentioned in the final verse of Surat al-Fātiḥah is not referring to the worldly blessings that all human beings receive, such as wealth, health, family, opportunities, etc. It is something that was granted to the close servants of God, and denied to those who angered God and those who went astray.

7.4 Imam al-Sajjad (a) states in one of his supplications: And among Your greatest favours to us is the continual flow of Your remembrance on our tongues, and Your permission to us to supplicate to You, exalt You, and glorify You!⁶⁰

7.5 In the previous verse, the supplicant is taught to ask for guidance on the straight path, and this verse gives further details of that path. It is the path of those on whom God has bestowed favours, foremost of which is the favour of guidance. Q4:69 tells us who these individuals are:

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ
مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ

*And whoever obeys God and the Messenger, those will be with the
ones upon whom God has bestowed favours, from the Prophets,
the veracious, the martyrs, and the righteous...*

7.6 About the use of the past tense, a tradition states that Imam al-Ridha (a) said: 'The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favours'... is a reference to God's favours to His close servants in the past, intending to evoke a desire in the servant to receive similar favours.⁶¹

7.7 [*Maghḍūb*, (مَغْضُوبٍ, those who have incurred [God's] wrath)]. The word is derived from *ghaḍaba*, meaning to become angry. In human beings, anger is an emotional reaction that may initiate a response. However, when matters such as love, gratitude, anger and so on are attributed

⁶⁰ Qummī, *Mafātiḥ al-Jinān, Munājāt al-dhākirīn* (The whispered prayer of the rememberers).

وَمِنْ أَكْثَرِ النِّعَمِ عَلَيْنَا جَزَاءُ دَعْوِكَ عَلَى الْبَيْنَةِ وَإِذْنُكَ لَنَا بِدُعَائِكَ وَتَرْبِيَتِكَ وَتَشْيِيعِكَ.

⁶¹ Ṣadūq, *Uyūn Akhbār*, 2/107.

غِيَرِ الرِّضَا (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) - «مِرَاطُ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ» تَوْكِيدٌ فِي السُّؤَالِ وَالرَّغْبَةِ وَذِكْرٌ لِمَا نَقُذُّ مِنْ نِعَمِهِ عَلَى أَوْلِيَائِهِ وَرَغْبَةٍ فِي مِثْلِ ذَلِكَ النِّعَمِ.

to God, it does not mean a change in state at all, because God is above all bodily limitations and reactions; rather, it refers to Divine recompense and retribution.

7.8 [*Dāllīn* (ضَالِّينَ, those who have gone astray)]. The word is derived from *dalla*, meaning to stray and to lack guidance. In this verse, it refers to those who strayed from *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* into deviant paths.

7.9 The insertion of the second negative (*lā*) between '*maghḍūbi 'alayhim*' and '*dāllīn*' is to emphasize that these groups are distinct from one another.

7.10 [*Maghḍūbi 'alayhim* (مَغْضُوبٍ عَلَيْهِمْ, those upon whom [Your wrath] is brought down)] and [*Dāllīn* (ضَالِّينَ, those who go astray)]: There are several possibilities about whom these two terms refer to:

- i) *Maghḍūbi 'alayhim* refers to the waverers and hypocrites, and *al-dāllīn* refers to those who have gone astray in general, without specifying any particular community or group.⁶²
- ii) *Maghḍūbi 'alayhim* refers to those amongst the Jews who earned God's wrath, and *al-dāllīn* refers to those amongst the Christians who had gone astray and distorted the teachings of their Prophets (a).⁶³ The next two chapters speak about these two groups in sequence with Surat al-Baqarah (2) addressing the conduct of the Jews and Surat Āl-'Imrān (3) the conduct of the Christians. A report states that one of the companions of Imam al-Sadiq (a) said: I asked the Imam (a), "Should I say '*Āmīn* (amen)' after the Imam of prayer says '*Not [the path] of those upon whom Your wrath is brought down, nor of those who go astray*'?" The Imam (a) replied, "That refers to the Jews and the Christians", and he did not reply to my question.⁶⁴ (This silence of Imam (a) was probably due to dissimulation (*taqiyyah*), and indicates his disapproval of the practice).⁶⁵
- iii) *Maghḍūbi 'alayhim* refers to those who went astray and misguided others as well, and *al-dāllīn* refers to those who went astray alone.⁶⁶

⁶² Shīrāzī, *Namūneh*, 1/55.

⁶³ Ṭabrisī, *al-Bayān*, 1/108.

⁶⁴ 'Āmilī, *Wasā'il*, 6/67.

عَنِ الصَّادِقِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) - عَنْ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ وَهَبٍ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لِأبي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) أَقُولُ: «أَمِينَ» إِذَا قَالِ الْإِمَامُ: «غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ»، قَالَ: «هُمْ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصَارَى»، وَلَمْ يُجِبْ بِي هَذَا.

⁶⁵ Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb*, 3/526.

⁶⁶ Shīrāzī, *Namūneh*, 1/55.

Q5:77 states:

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا أَهْوَاءَ
قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّوا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَضَلُّوا كَثِيرًا وَضَلُّوا عَنْ سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ

Say: O People of the Scripture! Do not exceed the bounds of your religion, trespassing beyond the truth, and do not follow the inclinations of a people who had 1) gone astray before and misled many, and 2) strayed from the right way.

7.11 The verse contrasts the paths chosen by three groups of people in their worship of God.⁶⁷

- i) The first group (*an'amta 'alayhim*) walks on a path of absolute servitude to God, enveloped in His special mercy, receiving His guidance and blessings continually, and constantly ascending in proximity towards Him. This is the group of the close servants (*awliya'*) of God. What the believer seeks in the previous verse is guidance on this path.
- ii) The second group of people (*maghdubi 'alayhim*) are those who worship something other than God, for example, wealth or their own desires. With the passage of time, their beliefs and actions move them further and further way from the right path. They lose sight of their human potential and give in to a pleasure-seeking existence. Instead of continually receiving God's favours like the first group, they become the focus of God's anger, and thereby lose the purpose for which they were brought to this world. Q20:81 states:

وَمَنْ يَخْلِلْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَىٰ

... And he upon whom My anger descends has indeed fallen.

- iii) The third group (*dallin*) is of people who waver between the two paths; sometimes they turn to God, and at other times they give in to their personal desires. The net result is that their life has little ultimate worth, and they go astray from the path that would have led them to achieve their true potential, and thereby perfection and Paradise. The verse calls this group *al-dallin*, and in Q4:143, God describes them as:

⁶⁷ Summarizing from: Muṭahhari, (*Āshnāyī bā Qur'an*), *Āthār*, 26/112-13.

مُذَبِّدِينَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ لَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ وَلَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ وَمَنْ يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ يَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا

They [the hypocrites] waver between this [and that], belonging neither to these [the believers] nor to those [the disbelievers]. And whoever God leaves astray, you [O Muhammad] will never find for him a way.

7.12 Out of the three groups described in this verse, the only one for whom God's direct action is mentioned is the first one, those that He blessed (*an'amta 'alayhim*). That is because whatever comes from God is only goodness and mercy. It is only man's defiant actions that earns Divine wrath and the penalty of misguidance.

SUMMARY OF THE VERSE

In summary, what is asked for in the last two verses is, "O God! Keep us on the correct path, the path of Your closest servants who constantly received Your blessings, not the path of those who did not worship You and thereby earned Your anger, or the path of those who wavered between this and that, and went astray thereby."

REFLECTIVE LEARNING

Let me reflect on which of these three groups I fit into best, given my own my beliefs and actions.

In summary it can be said that *maghdūbi 'alayhim* are those who had knowledge and misused it, and *al-dāllīn* and are those who had knowledge, but did not commit to it.

We do not want to belong to either group, so let me reflect on the knowledge that I have and how it is shown in my actions.